Speaker Notes: „Sharenting – Share with care"

What is „Sharenting"?

Now we have already got an impression of how you share photos. This practice has a name: "Sharenting."

What is Sharenting?

Sharenting, a composition of the words "share" and "parenting," reflects a modern practice where parents share photos and information about their children on social networks or messaging services like Facebook, WhatsApp, and Instagram. This form of sharing has fundamentally changed the way families, friends, and acquaintances participate in vacation memories and special moments of family life.

From Postcards to Digital Posts

In the past, postcards and letters conveyed special moments and greetings. Today, social networks and messaging services serve as the primary channels for sharing experiences. This evolution not only reflects a change in communication technology but also a shift in the culture of sharing and family interaction.

The motivations for sharenting are relatable and facilitated by online services

Motivations

Why do we share content at all? Often, we don't give it much thought because we like to let our surroundings be part of our lives. By doing so, we strengthen our bonds and maintain friendships, whether near or far. A significant motivation for sharenting is parental pride. The joy over the achievements and happiness of the children is shared to let others partake. Sometimes, we also share pictures and videos of our loved ones simply to preserve them as memories in our digital archives. Additionally, some parents share content to seek advice or support from people with similar experiences or expert knowledge.

Facilitating Factors

The ease of online services, which allow photos and videos to be published with just a few clicks, promotes the practice of sharing. Features like stories, chat groups, and channels make it possible to reach many people simultaneously and keep them updated on events in the family's life. A driving force behind sharing private content is social recognition. We need the acknowledgment of others to feel good. Moreover, in social interactions, we tend to adapt our behavior to the group's expectations. This means we post happy moments in our lives, which often include beautiful family situations.

The risks of our seemingly desirable behavior and the worst-case scenarios that can happen when others' expectations become more important than our children's safety are addressed in the video "Message from Ella."

Message from Ella

What risks our seemingly desirable behavior entails, and what can happen in the worst-case scenario when the expectations of others are more important than the safety of our children, is addressed in the video "Message from Ella."

After the video:

The video depicts the worst-case scenario, which often seems very unrealistic for our own situation. Let's look at the individual risks to better understand the topic:

Sharenting carries risks

Risks of Sharenting - A Deeper Look

Sharenting is more than just sharing photos online; it carries complex risks that should be carefully considered. This isn't just about privacy but also the long-term impacts on the well-being and digital identity of the children.

Risk 1: Exploitation by Third Parties - The Danger of Unauthorized Use

One of the biggest concerns with sharenting is the possibility that shared images may fall into the wrong hands. These photos can be misused by cyberbullies or stalkers, potentially causing emotional trauma to the children. Even more alarming is the potential use of these images for illegal activities, such as the creation of child pornography. Once on the internet, control over the distribution of these images can quickly be lost.

Risk 2: Disregard for Children's Privacy

As children grow older, they develop an awareness of their online presence and privacy. They might disagree with their parents' decision to share photos without their consent. This can damage the trust relationship between parents and children and lead to conflicts. Respecting children's opinions and consent is therefore crucial.

Risk 3: Children in Embarrassing Situations

A messy mouth after eating ice cream or playing with a rubber duck in the bathtub—parents often share funny moments of their children. Ask yourself: "Would I want to be photographed in this situation, and would I want this photo shared online?" A brief moment of self-reflection can help avoid such risks. The campaign **#deinkindauchnicht** clearly illustrates which types of photos fall into this category and helps with the guiding question, "Would I post a picture like this of myself?" with the answer "Your child wouldn't want that either."

Risk 4: Digital Footprints - The Indelibility of Digital Content

Once posted online, images are almost impossible to completely delete. This fact leads to a permanent digital footprint that can follow children throughout their lives. Such traces can limit the future opportunities of children and represent a lasting violation of their privacy. Messaging services like WhatsApp are often perceived as private and secure channels. However, this assumption can be misleading, as shared content can easily be forwarded and spread. This misconception results in personal and sensitive images becoming accessible to a much larger audience than intended.

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Risk 5: AI as an Amplifier of Risks

AI technologies, particularly facial recognition and deepfake content, introduce new levels of risk. Images can be automatically collected and misused to create child profiles, which can then be exploited for unwanted advertising purposes or even for creating offensive content. Furthermore, deepfake technologies can be used to generate convincing but entirely fake depictions of children, potentially harming their reputation and well-being. AI plays a significant role today. The use of various audio and image-generating AI applications multiplies the risks many times over. This is illustrated in the clip "Message from Ella."

Excursus into the legal foundations

The Rights of Children in the Digital Space, Especially in the Context of Sharenting, Are Protected by Various Legal Frameworks. The UN Convention on the Rights of the Child (UN-CRC) Plays a Central Role, Complemented by National Law and Specific Provisions on Data Protection and Personal Development. Here Is a Detailed Look at the Key Aspects:

Specific Rights from the UN-CRC

The Best Interests of the Child (Article 3, Paragraph 1 of the UN-CRC): The principle of the "best interests of the child" is central. It emphasizes that the well-being and will of the child must be considered in all decisions affecting them. This principle is particularly relevant in the context of sharenting, where decisions about sharing images have direct impacts on children.

Right to Privacy (Article 16 of the UN-CRC): Children have an explicit right to the protection of their privacy and honor. This includes protection against the unwanted publication of images and information in digital media.

Protection from Economic Exploitation (Article 32 of the UN-CRC): This includes protection from the use of children in advertising and other commercial activities that could be promoted through sharenting. The Convention calls on states to take measures to protect children from such practices.

Criminal Law Considerations

The Art Copyright Act and the General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR) set clear boundaries for the publication of children's images. Unauthorized publication can, under certain circumstances, have criminal consequences. From the first to the seventh year of a child's life, parents alone decide whether to publish images of their children, but from the age of eight, children have a say. Parents can face up to two years in prison if they take and distribute pictures of their children without the children's consent. This underscores the importance of consent in the publication of images and the relevance of data protection in this context. The prison sentence is legally possible in extreme cases. However, how often this is actually enforced is questionable.

Translation into Everyday Life

Recommendations for Action - Practical Tips for Parents

In the digital age, parents have a variety of new ways to share special moments of their children. However, this practice also comes with challenges and risks. The aforementioned risks highlight the need for a conscious and responsible approach to our children's digital presence. By respecting our children's privacy and giving them a voice in this matter, we can help protect them in an increasingly connected world.

The following recommendations and tips can help parents decide the extent to which they want to share photos of their children.

Sharing photos via social media

- Interactive: Before presenting the tips, ask the group about their own sharenting behaviors and what they consider important.

- If no one mentions sharing photos on social media, this case can be skipped.

Use of Security Settings

Privacy Settings: Utilize the security and privacy settings on social media platforms to control who can see the shared content. Ensure that only trusted individuals have access to your posts.

Background on Usage Rights on Social Media: [What Instagram, WhatsApp, and Facebook Can Do With Your Photos](https://magazin.sofatutor.com/schueler/was-duerfen-instagram-whatsapp-und-facebook-mit-meinen-fotos-machen/)

Privacy as a Top Priority

Not Everything Needs to Be Shared: Some moments and experiences are so special that they should remain within the family. Consider preserving these memories in a traditional photo album that is shared only with close relatives.

Sharing photos via messenger

End-to-End Encryption – WhatsApp & Co

End-to-end encryption ensures that only you and the person you're communicating with can read or listen to what has been sent – no one in between, not even WhatsApp.

Note: Despite end-to-end encryption, handle personal information and data with care! Do not send bank details, passwords, home addresses, credit card information, explicit photos, etc., via WhatsApp. You can never be sure if the recipients will forward these contents or if their phone might end up in someone else's hands.

Photographing others & sharing pictures of your child

Note:

Handling this topic can be particularly challenging; consider using this page as a starting point for discussion:

- Risk of causing irritation due to differing views on "sharenting" practices

- Importance of clarifying personal boundaries IN ADVANCE

- Possibly discuss boundaries and appropriate behavior with your child beforehand

Setting boundaries when it comes to sharenting is your responsibility

Conclusion:

The measures presented cannot mitigate all risks associated with sharenting. We encourage you to further engage with the topic and share some helpful links with you. Because our responsibility towards children does not end with the topic of sharenting.

Further Information:

https://www.flimmo.de/

serves as a parental guide for TV, streaming, and YouTube

Test your Knowledge

Put your own knowledge to the test, or even expand it. The quiz offers a comprehensive overview of the most important aspects of sharenting, from the motivations to the potential dangers. It is aimed at anyone who wants to find out more about the topic and make informed make informed decisions.