

IFFD international conference presentation one year on; Parenting in the digital age.

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I had the pleasure of giving a keynote presentation at the 2019 IFFD International conference in London. What a wonderful day out. I met so many passionate parents from around the world wanting to do their best by their children. And, what a year it has been since the conference, with the global pandemic changing so many aspects of our lives. During my presentation I spoke about how you can help your children flourish online. I think the pandemic has brought this concern into even sharper focus.

When the global pandemic crisis is over, I can see us looking back at the Internet as the technology that saved thousands of lives and reduced the impact on the economy. It has allowed scientists and doctors around the world to collaborate more easily as they search for a vaccination. It has enabled many people to continue working at home. It has helped many teachers and parents to continue to provide an education for their children when the schools closed. It has provided us with ways to connect with friends and family when we couldn't meet up with them. It has been a way that people could reach out to those in their community to ask for help getting food and medicines. It has been a much-needed source of entertainment. In many ways it has been an unsung hero during the pandemic.

But, the Internet also has a darker side. As a parent of two children I worry about what impact the Internet is having on their lives. My concern is not so much about if they are spending too long online but more about how their online interactions are impacting on their health, happiness and wellbeing. Amongst other things I worry about them being cyber-bullied, what their digital legacy will be and if they are safe online. I know my concerns are shared by many parents I meet – including many of you who I spoke to after my presentation.

During my presentation at the IFFD conference, I spoke about the ideas in the book I was writing at the time. I am delighted to say the book, entitled [*THRIVE; How to Cultivate Character So Your Children Can Flourish Online*](#), will be published in January. In it I explain how parents and families can develop character and what I call cyber-wisdom in their children. I talk about my experience of bringing up my children in the digital world in the UK. However, because the technologies and software are somewhat universal and global, I believe many of the messages are applicable for parents around the world. I hope the book is a source of advice and inspiration for any parents asking big questions, like me, about how best to bring their children up today. My core message is that we cannot wait for Big Tech or policy makers to get their acts together (although we must not let them off the hook) – instead we must seek to cultivate values, qualities and skills in our children that make it more likely they will do the 'right' thing when interacting online. I also show you how you might do this through two models (REACT and THRIVE) which I first unveiled during my IFFD conference presentation.

If you buy the book I would love to hear from you - please do tell me what you think. It is through my interactions with children, parents and families (such as those of you whom I met in London) that I learn the most about how children can thrive in the digital age.

You can find out more about THRIVE, How to cultivate Character so your children can flourish online here:

https://www.amazon.co.uk/gp/product/B08BJPTLVR?pf_rd_r=X82QCP30SBG8RV0X684B&pf_rd_p=e632fea2-678f-4848-9a97-bcecd59cb4e