



HOW TO PROTECT YOUR CHILDREN FROM CYBER-BULLYING AND THE INTERNET.

American teens are more wired now than ever before, with major advancements in technology (laptops, I-pads, Smartphone's, etc.) and social websites (Twitter, Facebook, Myspace, etc.), it can seem like just keeping track of what your children are doing is a full time job.

Before looking at what you can do to protect your children, let's look at how real this threat is. Unfortunately, the statistics I'm about to share with you are frightening and I strongly urge you to take the time to read and review this article it might make a big difference your child's life.

Statistics on Adult Websites and teenage usage:

- There are 4.2 million pornographic websites which equals roughly 12% of all websites in the world. Also, more than 26 Children's character names (Including Mickey Mouse, Barbie, Pokeman, Action Man to name a few) are linked to hundreds of thousands of pornography sites
- 90% of 8-16 year olds have viewed pornography online (most while doing homework.)
- The average age of first Internet exposure to pornography is 11 years old.
- 1 in 5 five children ages 10-17 have received a sexual solicitation over the Internet. Of those solicitations 70% of the sexual advances over the Internet happened while they were on their home computer.
- 21% of teens say they have looked at something on the Internet that they wouldn't want their parents to know about.

According to the Crimes Against Children Research Center the risks to children, particularly teenagers, in cyberspace include exposure to:

- Unwanted sexual solicitations (1 in 7 children)
- Unwanted exposure to sexual material (1 in 3 children)
- Harassment —threatening or other offensive behavior directed at them (1 in 11 children)

According to a study done by Harris Interactive-McAfee in October 2008:

- 32% of teens clear the browser history to hide what they do online from their parents.
- 16% have created private e-mail addresses or social networking profiles to hide what they do online from their parents.
- 63% of teens said they know how to hide what they do online from their parents.
- 43% have closed or minimized the browser at the sound of a parental step.
- 11% have unlocked or disabled parental filtering controls.
- 52% of teens have given out personal information online to someone they don't know offline including personal photos and/or physical descriptions of themselves.
- 20% of teens have engaged in cyberbullying behaviors, including posting mean or hurtful information or embarrassing pictures, spreading rumors, publicizing private communications, sending anonymous e-mails or cyberpranking someone.

What is cyber-bullying, exactly?

The National Crime Prevention Council's definition of cyber-bullying is "when the Internet, cell phones or other devices are used to send or post text or images intended to hurt or embarrass another person." Most organizations dedicated to Internet safety, security and privacy, defines cyberbullying as: "a situation when a child or teen is repeatedly 'tormented, threatened, harassed, humiliated, embarrassed or otherwise targeted' by another child or teenager using text messaging, email, instant messaging or any other type of digital technology."

Cyber-bullying can be as simple as continuing to send messages to someone who has said they want no further contact with the sender, but often it includes threats, sexual remarks, derogative labels, hate speech, ganging up on victims by making them the subject of ridicule in forums, and posting false statements aimed at humiliating them.

Cyber-bullies may disclose their victims' personal data (e.g. real name, address, or school) at websites or forums or they may pose as their victim for the purpose of publishing material in their name that defames or ridicules them. Some cyberbullies may also send threatening and harassing emails and instant messages to the victims, while others post rumors or gossip and instigate others to dislike and gang up on the target.

Statistics

In September 2006, ABC News reported on a survey of 1,500 students between grades 4-8:

- 42% of children have been bullied while online. 20% of those children have had it happen more than once.
- 35% of children have been threatened online. Nearly one in five have had it happen more than once.
- 21% of children have received mean or threatening e-mails or other messages.

- 58% of children admit someone has said mean or hurtful things to them online. More than four out of ten say it has happened more than once.
- 58% have not told their parents or an adult about something mean or hurtful that happened to them online.

Harmful effects

Research has demonstrated a number of serious consequences of cyber-bullying victimization. For example, victims have lower self-esteem, increased suicidal ideation, and a variety of emotional responses, including cyber-bullying others, fear, frustration, anger, and depression.

One of the most damaging effects is that a victim begins to avoid friends and activities, often the very intention of the cyber-bully.

Can cyber-bullying really lead to suicide?

Unfortunately, YES!

Cyber-bullying campaigns are sometimes so damaging that victims have committed suicide. There are at least four examples in the United States in recent years where cyber-bullying has been linked to the suicide of a teenager. One of the most recent incidents is the suicide of Megan Meier, who hung herself 3 weeks before her 14th birthday because of cyber-bullying attacks sent to her Myspace account.

How can I tell if my child is going to websites I don't approve of? How can I protect my children from Cyber-bullying, Adult website, etc?

There are numerous ways to protect and prevent your children from this sort of abuse.

Call me at (707) 888-7676 and we can talk about identifying if your child is at risk, what websites are they going to, and how to lock your computer's ability to access these dangerous websites and chat-rooms.



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