

MySpace & Internet Safety

New Challenges in Parenting

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Computers and Interactive Technology



1984



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Technology and Teen Monitoring

- Telephone
 - ◆ '60-'70s : Two telephones in home - 1 - kitchen, 1 parent's bedroom
 - ◆ Cordless telephones
 - ◆ Cell phones, text messaging (little accountability)
 - ◆ Prepaid cell phones - no accountability
- Television and Radio
 - ◆ Over the air television / radio with few channels and strict censorship
 - ✦ Primetime programming (6-10pm) - family audience
 - ◆ 24/7 Cable, satellite television and radio with limited censorship
 - ✦ Some parental controls (Vchip), Cable box controls
- Personal Computers
 - ◆ Programming tool, word processing - CD ROM data
 - ◆ Internet, Instant Messaging and Chat (virus, spyware)
 - ◆ Social Networks - MySpace

MySpace: What is it?

It is a successful social network that meets the needs of various age groups and populations.

Basic Human Needs: Acceptance, Belonging, Communication, Community, Connection, Growth, Humor, Inclusion, Self Expression

Developmental Needs: Identity Exploration and Development, Networking, Establish Social Status

Similar sites: Facebook, Xanga

The Dangers: Child Abductions

- Recent media attention
 - ◆ News reports of abductions, murders with investigation links to MySpace
 - ◆ Stepped up Law Enforcement Entrapment
 - “To Catch a Predator 4”
Dateline NBC - Perverted-Justice.com
- Risks higher under certain conditions:
 - ◆ Photos and privacy information given on-line
 - Meetings, parties, scheduled on MySpace
 - ◆ Child has certain personality characteristics
 - ◆ Poor family communication
 - ◆ Poor parental monitoring

The Dangers: Runaway Resources

- Online associations expand child's options
 - ◆ Girls at greater risk but boys also at risk
 - ◆ Contacts anonymous (untraceable)
 - ◆ Parents often unaware of on-line friends
- Online relationships may be strong
 - ◆ Significant needs met - connection, approval, empathy, compassion, fun
- Depression, anxiety & mental health issues
 - ◆ Hopeless, unhappy home life
- Substance Abuse - Drugs, Alcohol a lure
- Poor Family Communication, Problem Solving, Parenting Practices

The Dangers: Exposure to Deviant Peer Issues

- The Problem affecting the greatest number of teens
 - ◆ Exposure to issues of drugs, alcohol, sex, parental defiance, foul language, violence
 - ◆ Teen bravado - lying and exaggerating attempting to “act” an older age .
 - ◆ Emphasizes “leading edge” of culture
 - ◆ Belonging, acceptance needs puts kids at risk
 - ◆ Age deceit leads to inappropriate communication between children of different age groups or between children and adults

The Dangers: Exposure to Deviant Peer Issues

- Amount of exposure leads to normalizing the deviant behaviors
 - ◆ Kids will come in contact with deviant peers throughout their life - *It is the amount of the exposure and ability to seek adult guidance that is critical.*
- Spending too much time socializing on-line and not enough time on academic, family and “real-world” social activities.

The Dangers: Victim of or Perpetrating Social Aggression

- Social aggression is a common aspect of adolescent development (adaptive?)
 - ◆ Identity and emotional development, aids understanding
 - ◆ Seeking popularity, social and network status
 - ◆ Can be very hurtful with lasting consequences
- Perpetrators linked to low self esteem and variety of negative outcomes
- Girls > Boys
 - ◆ Boys greater physical aggression
- Risks: Unsupervised and wider audience

Fake Pages: Public Humiliation and Cyberbullying

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FROM PAGE 1

The Orange County register

Fake pages invade MySpace

Imposter profiles for at least nine O.C. school administrators have been discovered on the site that is popular with teens.

By SAM MILLER
THE ORANGE COUNTY REGISTER

Like most Orange County schools, La Habra High blocks the Web site MySpace.com from campus computers.

Many school officials revile the social networking site, and principals and school safety officers have poked at PTA and community meetings, warning of what they say are dangerous forums where teens use inhibitions and good sense.

So it was strange when e-mails supposedly from La Habra Principal Jennifer Leeman showed up in students' MySpace inboxes, requesting they join her MySpace network of friends.

"I figured, since we blocked MySpace at school, right as well see what all the fuss is about!" the principal's page said. "Well, I see that MySpace is very fun and all you students out there look for it coming back!"

It was fun, a prank played by a student at La Habra High, who filled Leeman's page with a camera-shone picture and such personal details as favorite TV shows ("Nip/Tuck") and interests ("Classic rock, especially when I'm on my way").

As MySpace has exploded — 63 million users and counting by about



IMPOSTERS: Fake MySpace pages of Jai Asenari, principal at Corona del Mar High, and Kirk Baserman, middle school principal at Costa Mesa High.

The Dangers: Additional Risks

- Public Record of Teen's Life and Character
 - ◆ College Admissions, Scholarships
 - ◆ Job Applicants
- Negative effects of on-line socializing:
 - ◆ Less face to face non-verbal communication
 - ◆ Less awareness of dangers and risks
 - ◆ Research just beginning into cyberbullying, ostracism, social aggression, multitasking and attentional issues

Why Can't MySpace Protect My Child?

- Impossible task, 90 individuals tasked with monitoring millions of users
 - ◆ Systems can't review photos and graphic images
 - ◆ What monitoring for? Empathy, compassion, encouragement, support?
 - ◆ If kick off users, they reenter with new identity
 - ◆ Only need an email address.
 - ◆ Can't even see all activities - telephone, other chat
- No way to qualify true age of users
 - ◆ MySpace kicked off 200,000 underage children
 - ◆ They can just sign up again saying they are older!

Can't the Government Protect My Child?

- Federal, state and local law enforcement has stepped up enforcement and entrapment of pedophiles
- New laws being drafted, approved all the time
- Parent education most effective solution
 - ◆ Parents need to be aware
 - ◆ Parents need to be proactive and involved

What can parents do?

Discuss MySpace with your Teen

- Have them show you their MySpace page
- Ask them about MySpace and how they use it
- Have them click over to other “friend’s” MySpace
- Have them explain questionable material
- Discuss your concerns in a calm manner.
- Explain that you intend to have them agree to certain standards of use to allow them to continue
- Don’t expect them to agree with you
“But mom....everyone does it”

What can parents do? Prepare an Agreement

- Have them sign an agreement as a condition of using the computer (computer is a privilege)
 - ◆ Be completely honest and up front with your concerns and intentions. Detail consequences for non-compliance
 - ◆ Concerns such as privacy information, language, behavior, allowed sites and allowed time of use should be discussed with your child
 - ◆ Review the actual MySpace agreement
 - ◆ Mention in the agreement that you may choose to monitor their on-line activities if you find it necessary
- Explain that on-line activities will be monitored periodically and failure to follow the agreement will result in computer grounding for a period of time.

MySpace Prohibited Content (partial)

- Prohibited Content includes Content that: i. is obscene, patently offensive, or promotes racism, bigotry, hatred or physical harm of any kind against any group or individual; ii. harasses or advocates harassment of another person; iii. involves the transmission of "junk mail", "chain letters," or unsolicited mass mailing or "spamming"; iv. promotes information that you know is false or misleading or promotes illegal activities or conduct that is abusive, threatening, obscene, defamatory or libelous; v. promotes an illegal or unauthorized copy of another person's copyrighted work, such as providing pirated computer programs or links to them, providing information to circumvent manufacture-installed copy-protect devices, or providing pirated music or links to pirated music files; vi. contains restricted or password only access pages or hidden pages or images (those not linked to or from another accessible page); vii. provides material that exploits people under the age of 18 in a sexual or violent manner, or solicits personal information from anyone under 18; viii. provides instructional information about illegal activities such as making or buying illegal weapons, violating someone's privacy, or providing or creating computer viruses;

What can parents do? Parental Limit Setting

- Decide on and implement usage limits
- Limit MySpace to children over the age of 16
 - ◆ Check to ensure your child is not on MySpace.
 - ◆ Restrict computer use if defiant
- Limit the amount of time your child spends on MySpace and the computer
 - ◆ Kids explain that they feel they have to be a part of it but don't understand why
 - ◆ They can spend hours on it and still complain about getting off the computer - lose track of time
- Don't be afraid to set limits!!!
- Lead by example - monitor and limit your own use!

What can parents do? Parental Monitoring

- Only 23% of 7-12th graders report having rules for computer use (Kaiser Foundation)
- Decide what online privacy you will afford your child based on your values and assessment of risk:
 - ◆ Monitor selectively, upon limits
 - ◆ Monitor all activity, chat, email
- Monitor your child's MySpace account and other on-line activities
 - ◆ Do Google or Yahoo searches periodically
 - ◆ Create a Myspace account and look for your child and their peers
 - ◆ Remind them of your monitoring activity

What can parents do? Install Monitoring/Filtering Software

- Check out the tools from your ISP
- Install Filtering / Monitoring Software
 - ◆ Get technical help if necessary
- Be up front about your monitoring
 - ◆ Talk to your children
- Software has limitations:
 - ◆ Filtering software is not perfect
 - ◆ Time limiting features may motivate teen to defeat - PC Moderator used for time limits
 - ◆ Software can be hacked or worked around by tech-savvy teens
- Bottom Line: Limit unsupervised computer use: Parent involvement best solution



In Case of Serious Problems: “Stealth” Monitoring Software

- Do not use in stealth mode simply because:
 - ✦ You are afraid they will be angry
 - ✦ You don't want them to think you don't trust them
- Do use if:
 - ◆ You suspect serious drug, alcohol and anti-social behavior
 - ✦ And concerned computer used to enable these behaviors
 - ◆ Child has history of lying, running away, secretive behavior
 - ◆ Need is to confirm behavior in order to get agreement between parents or other caregivers to initiate professional treatment
- Confront and get professional help
- Any mention of self injury or suicide - get help immediately!!

Work on the relationship with your teen

- Stay “connected” with your teen
 - ◆ Spend time with your teen - find activities to do together
 - ◆ Have family dinner together!
- Don't minimize or criticize their on-line relationships
 - ◆ Show an interest in their on-line friends
 - ◆ Show an interest in their on-line activities
- Let them know you will not be upset with them or take away the computer if they share problem experiences on the Internet
- Seek professional help if necessary

What can parents do? Learn the technology

- The technology divide puts children at risk due to inadequate monitoring and limit setting
- Learn about the parental controls from your Internet Service Provider
- Spend time on the internet at responsible sites with news and information about risks for teens
- Learn about MySpace - setup an account, investigate
- Learn about instant messaging, web browsing histories
- Attend school and community meetings
- Go to computer classes

But I am overwhelmed!!

- Media MySpace drama - limit exposure
 - ✦ Excess fear can cause overreacting or giving up
- Set reasonable limits, monitor your teens activities both on and off line
- Get agreement on proper user of computer
- Spend time with your teen (be creative)
- Be aware of and reduce parental stress
- Seek teen parenting support group
- To make decisions about on-line activities, consider off-line activities with similar risks.
- Seek professional help if necessary

Resources

- Helpful web sites
 - ◆ www.netsmartz.org
 - ◆ www.netfamilyneww.org
 - ◆ www.safekids.com
 - ◆ www.staysafe.org
 - ◆ www.perverted-justice.org
- Community Resources
 - ◆ Local law enforcement
 - ✦ Report problems
 - ◆ PRYDE (Pepperdine Resource Youth Diversion and Education) 949-425-1911
 - ◆ The Parent Project 361-8386
- This presentation online @ www.wooglabs.com