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Teens And Blogs – Internet Safety Wake–Up Call

By Rose DesRochers

In November of 2005, I read that a Roman Catholic high school in Sparta had ordered its students to remove personal blogs from the Internet, in the name of protecting them from cyberpredators. Which brings me to an important question, just how can you keep your child safe online?

The Internet is a "gateway" which leads the adult predator to your child. Parents need to recognize the need to better monitor their children's online activity. I believe that websites like xanga, myspace, and livejournal, make it all too easy for sexual predators to prey on our children.

Children are vulnerable and they don't realize that anyone can and most likely is reading their blog entries. Both my children have blogs, however they are under moderation by both my husband and I. Frankly, as a parent of two teenagers I believe that it is up to us as parents to educate our children about the online dangers.

Children's blogs are a pedophile's playground, because of the easy ability to look into a child's world. As parents we can help our children stay safe while using a blog. For information about blogging safety please visit

<http://BlogSafety.com>

and

<http://SafeTeens.com>

Regarding sites like hi5: I've received several invitations from hi5, but I never signed up until November 2005. It wasn't long before I was removing my account. I should have read the privacy policy before I registered.

It reads: hi5 collects personal information when you register, when you use hi5, when you visit hi5 pages or the pages of certain hi5 partners. hi5 may combine information about you that we have with information we obtain from business partners or other companies. Once you register with hi5 and sign

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in to our services, you are not anonymous to us. hi5 collects information about your transactions with us and with some of our business partners. hi5 automatically receives and records information on our server logs from your browser.

Basically, they have spyware.

Hi5 collects your Hotmail or yahoo address lists and contacts. Once you register there is an e–mail that is sent to everyone in your address book. This e–mail is sent without your permission.

The website also requests, your hotmail and yahoo password. I never gave my password, I was not that gullible. However hi5 was still able to gather my information and contact those listed in my address book. I finally was able to delete my account, through the instructions in their help file.

In my opinion, hi5 is even worse than xanga and myspace.

I encourage all parents, whose children have an account on hi5, to log into hi5 and delete their children's account.

Too much personal information is being revealed on these websites, making it a haven for sexual predators. Parents need to wake up.

I for one, am very concerned with websites like hi5, MySpace, Xanga, DeadJournal, Blurty, etc that encourage children to post their photos and personal information.

I strongly suggest that if your child uses the computer and you have not been monitoring their activity, it is time that you found out just what they are doing.

A report aired Dateline Friday, Jan. 27, at 9 p.m. by Rob Stafford, a Correspondent of NBC News, tells parents why they should mind MySpace. If you have not seen this report, I suggest you take a moment to view it at:

<http://www.msnbc.msn.com/id/11064451/>

You owe it to your children.

Which brings me to my next concern, the Internet is a scary place, filled with all kind of strange people. I believe that when you post your child's picture on the net, you put them at risk.

Did you know that your personal information, such as your home phone number and address can easily be found on the internet?

If this isn't one reason to make you reconsider posting your child's picture on the internet, how about that in this day and age, photos can be digitally altered and appear on porn sites.

According to the National Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Children more than 20,000 images of

child pornography are posted on the internet every week.

Donna Rice Hughes of

<http://Protectkids.com>

states, "... the demand for pornographic images of

babies and toddlers on the internet is soaring." (Prof. Max Taylor, Combating Paedophile Information Networks in Europe, March 2003). More babies and toddlers are appearing on the net and the abuse is getting worse. Images are more torturous and sadistic than they were was before. The typical age of children found on pornography sites is between 6 and 12, but the profile is getting younger (Prof. Max Taylor, Combating Paedophile Information Networks in Europe, March 2003). The U.S. Customs Service estimates that there are more than 100,000 web sites offering child pornography – which is illegal worldwide. Red Herring Magazine, 1/18/02)"

I don't consider myself paranoid, but I don't post my children's pictures on the internet and I believe that you shouldn't either. We all have cute children and are proud of them. But parents, please use some common sense. Keep your child safe and out of the arms of child predators. A good website to check out is:

<http://members.tripod.com/~Seadooer/sayno–contests.html>

Say no to children's pictures on the web and for goodness sake, monitor your child's internet activity. Our children are our most valuable asset, love them and protect them.

Rose DesRochers is a published poet and freelance writer. Rose has been writing poetry for more than 20 years. She is also the founder of

<http://www.todays–woman.net>

, a supportive online writing

community for men and women over 18. She is also the Assistant Administrator of

<http://www.invision–graphics.com>

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The Teenage Blog Outbreak

By Ken Snodin

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Blogs are the new buzzword in cyberspace. Anyone and everyone who uses the Internet now know about the concept of blogging. Though males and females, young and old alike are blogging away, it is the teenagers who have the briskness to use this new virtual platform to its maximum potential.

Having grown up using the computer and the Internet for a large number of their informational needs, these first–generation computer users are at ease when they convey their opinions, thoughts and feelings using the web technology. The use of various platforms of communication on the net comes extremely naturally to them. Unlike older writers who sometimes tend to experience moment of stagnation, the teens can be seen blogging effortlessly.

The rapid emergence of blogs can be attributed to the unequalled characteristic of the platform where teens can acquire a sense of satisfaction from expressing themselves while remaining anonymous if they want to. Teens create their own blogging space and invite friends, peers and even strangers to join in. This allows for them to receive the much–needed attention that many youngsters today want. But, one of the most frightful nightmares of a teen is the fear that a parent or a custodian will chance upon his or her blog.

Though teenagers can write with great alacrity on the blogging platforms, they have very little experience of writing beyond the Internet. This is primarily because publishers of magazines, journals and newspapers are extremely skeptical of publishing young writers. This discourages the youngsters and is probably throttling a major talent which is emerging.

Blogging has found acceptability among the youth since it allows them a forum wherein they can express themselves and showcase their talents without the restraining arms of the publisher. The large reach of this new–age phenomenon grants them the flexibility of using their technical skills to acquire attention and to gain a readership for their writing.

Blogging is also a medium by which people with similar interests and opinions can come together and share views. Discussions, arguments and debates can abet thought and can provide positive reinforcements to the teens of the world. This medium of self expression helps the teenagers to put their thoughts out there where someone will notice it. And given the busy schedules of most parents, it provides a much–needed release.

For more articles of interest to teenagers, covering teen concerns and health visit

<http://www.teen–articles.com>



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