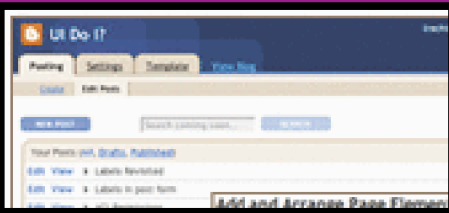


Cyber-Safety

NEWS AND INFORMATION TO HELP KEEP OUR CHILDREN SAFE

What are... Social Networking Sites



Social networking sites allow people to **gather on-line around shared interests or causes**, like finding people who live nearby or who are in the same age range. These sites **allow teens to design their own personalized page on the Internet**, much like an interactive scrapbook, that can include their favorite music clips, their choice of background designs or “wallpaper,” photos, favorite quotes and any other **information about themselves** – and anyone else – that they wish to include. Users can also set up **blogs (online public journals)**, a friend network and messages centers.

For advice on how to open the conversation about general computer use and how much time your teen is spending online, visit TheAntiDrug.com’s “Conversations for Parents: My Teen is Lost in Cyberspace.”

Did You Know?

One-third (33%) of 13-17 year olds and nearly half (48%) of 16-17 year olds report that their parents or guardians know “very little” or “nothing” about what they do on the Internet.

Why... do teens love these sites?

These sites expose teens to the world. They enable teens to access people living anywhere in the U.S. or in foreign countries, as well as their peers from school. It's a place where they can create and showcase who they are and also keep tabs on all of their friends. Unless under a hidden view or setting, profile pages are open for all to see. But most of all, teens love social networking sites because it's their space. There is a sense of empowerment attached to controlling a piece of their own world... and this is typically a world where parents are not present.

When... should you suspect your teen is getting into trouble?

If you know your teen has a personal homepage, especially through a social networking site, but you don't have any idea what is on it, check it out. Make sure that your teen has a homepage only if it is allowed for minors. Listen to what music and look at video clips your teen downloads or simply lists as his/her favorites. If any includes suggestive language about drugs and alcohol, or promotes dangerous behaviors, such as casual sex or violence, or shows participation in cyberbullying, let this be a red flag. Check out the friends in their network and see what they are posting on their sites. If your teen's friends have pictures of themselves at parties and everyone has a beer in their hand, chances are your teen has been to similar events. There may also be cause for alarm if your teen spends an inordinate amount of time online or e-mailing friends, seems secretive about his/her online activities or if the computer screen goes blank every time you walk by.

These newsletters on cyber-safety will lead up to the May 7, 2007 parent workshop called, Keeping Your Children Safe in the Cyber-World. For more information on cybersafety, visit our website for previous newsletters: <http://www.sbschools.org/schools/xrds/technology>

Taken from: <http://www.theantidrug.com/e-monitoring/overview.asp>