



Family Insider — *Cutting Edge of MySpace*

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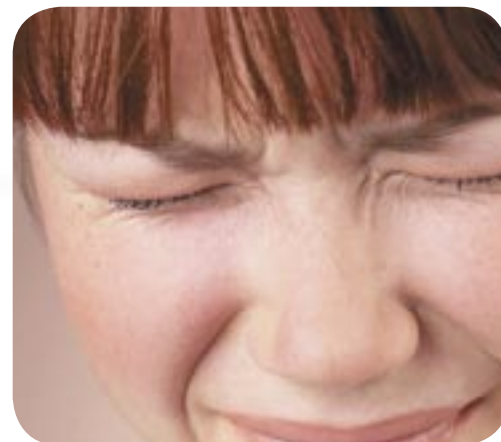
My daughter is an 8th-grader and has been LIVING online for quite some time. She had recently been through a lot. Her dad and I divorced. She and I moved from Georgia to Tennessee. I felt I needed to let her find her place in the new city and with new friends. I trusted that she would make the right choices. Soon, I hardly saw her, as she was usually online in her bedroom. If I said anything about her time online, it only caused more problems.

In November, the guidance counselor at my daughter's school called. My daughter had told the counselor she was worried about a friend who was cutting (kids purposely cut their body until they bleed) himself and had some family issues. The counselor asked the right questions, and my daughter said she'd been cutting herself, too. I didn't believe this.

At home we sat and talked. My daughter told me she didn't know why she did it—it was like an addiction that she couldn't stop. I asked her to show me where she'd been cutting, because I still could not believe this. To my COMPLETE SHOCK, each shoulder had gashes at least two inches long and ½-inch wide. Her right leg had several gashes where it looked like skin was removed from her. I was sick, literally.

My daughter was severely depressed about life and said her friends, Punk music, and life online kept her going. She said sometimes she wanted to die. This was a 13-year-old child of mine! I was VERY concerned about her use of MySpace and Xanga. One of her therapists said there was nothing wrong with those sites. I felt that I was in a battle on my own!

I got my daughter into a school treatment program. It taught her about emotions, how to identify what she was feeling, and how to not act on those feelings negatively. Now she is back in her regular school and trying hard to keep her head up. Recently, I met with the school counselor who put me in touch with the [Parent Teacher Student



Association] PTSA president, who told me about i-SAFE and the programs it offers communities.

I used to say, "I hate teenagers!" Now I can honestly say my passion is for these kids who are lost in a fantasy land online, and for their parents who are in the dark. I am volunteering with i-SAFE and telling my story, and I am willing to go as far as I can to help wake up parents and communities to what is happening to our youth online!

As for my family, I allow my daughter to go online with me for music, clothing, and homework. I am still waiting for the right time to let her online on her own. She says she will delete her MySpace and Xanga accounts, and she knows her purpose is to share her experience with others. I hope and pray she will do what she can to help save others who might get caught up in it all while dealing with depression, addictions, and poor advice to each other. God bless our youth!

Cindy, Memphis

NAC Tracks

Have you searched for your kids or their friends on MySpace?

Yes or No



*"In youth we learn;
in age we understand"*

- Marie Von Ebner-Eschenbach

Ask an Expert—When to Report Online Issues



Q: How do I know when an online issue involving my child should be reported to authorities?

A: i-SAFE statistics* show that 42 percent of kids have been bullied while online, and 35 percent of kids have been threatened online.

Determining when to get others involved in an online issue can be difficult. One thing is certain: If you believe that your child is communicating with an adult, you should report it . . . immediately!

Several things must be taken into account when making a decision concerning whether to report cyber bullying or online threats: the type of threat used (inappropriate language or photos, insults, threats of bodily harm, threats of death), frequency of the threats, the anonymity or number of sources, and the method used to threaten.

The severity of the threats is also important in determining your course of action:

- Is your child receiving frequent threatening e-mails or instant messages (IMs)?
- Is the source revealing your child's personal information online (phone number, name, school, personal secrets, etc.)?
- Is the source following your child from Web site to Web site online (stalking)?
- Is the source pretending to be your child online or sending messages supposedly from your child?
- Is the source posting harassing or hateful Web sites about your child?
- Is the source posting your child's name on "slam books," "hit lists," or "ugly lists" online, setting up "hot or not" Web sites intended to humiliate your child, or posting inappropriate comments on your child's or other's blogs?
- Is the source sharing contact information about the child along with sexual statements or solicitation (i.e. "I'd like to (sexual comment)," or "For a good time, call (name)")?
- Is the source sending malicious codes, spam, or spyware to your child or others while posing as your child?

- Has the source posted photos/images or sexual photos/images (actual or manipulated) of your child online?

If the communication is only a flame, set the e-mail or IM program to block the users e-mail address or IM user name, and report the offender to the IM or e-mail providers, your Internet service provider (ISP), or the source's ISP.

If the threats increase, or the severity of the threats increases, contact law enforcement. You can also file a report with your local FBI office. To find your local FBI office contact information, go to <http://www.fbi.gov/contact/fo/fo.htm>.

Most importantly, keep the lines of communication open with your children so they will come to you if they are being bullied or threatened online. Teach them how to save e-mails and IMs (they may be needed to take action), to never respond to a threat or flame e-mail or IM, and to never meet with whom they are communicating online.

Trust your instincts—it is OK to call law enforcement and be "wrong." It could prove a tragic mistake if your instincts are correct and you don't make that report. **i**



* Based on 2004 i-SAFE survey of 1,500 students in grades four through eight

Site
Spotlight

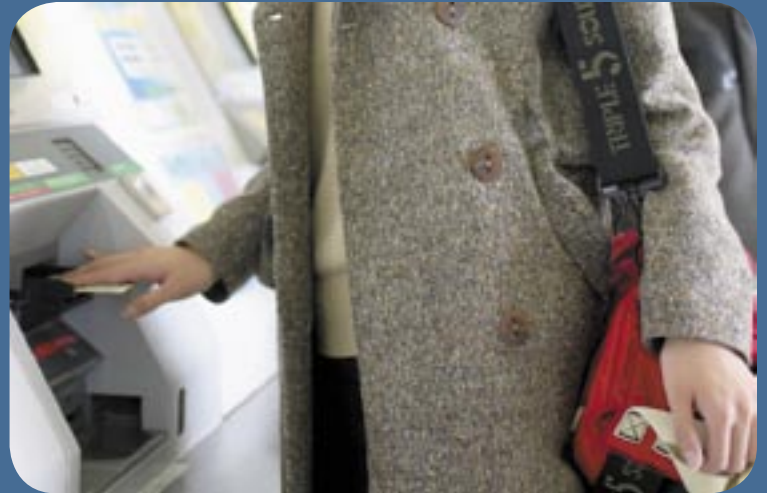
Want up-to-date information on using the Internet and making decisions regarding online usage in schools? Check out www.eschoolnews.com. This site offers something for everyone about technology in the school system. Here you can find information about vendors and products, but most important are the daily news stories regarding studies, important hot topics, and more in educational technology.

Tech Tip—Protecting Kids from Identity Theft


Q: I think my daughter's identity is being stolen. We have been receiving offers for credit cards, etc., in her name, and she says she never applied for them (she is 14). How does this happen, and should we be concerned?

A: Yes, you should be concerned. According to a report from *NewsHour Extra* for students, "Emerging Identity Theft Market Targets Teens as Newest Niche" states that, "Over 10 million people were victims of identity theft last year, and young people with no credit records were the number one target." So if teens have no credit history, why would they be targeted? Primarily because of that lack of credit history; nothing would be flagged if that identity was used to apply for a low-limit credit card or services. Unfortunately, most of this fraud can go undetected for years until your teen is ready to get a drivers' license or apply for a student loan. They may then be in for a rude awakening—their credit history could be marred with bad debt, and/or their social security number could have been used to secure a drivers' license for someone else.

How does this happen? Although we have mandatory classes in school to prepare our kids for the real world, we don't have any classes on the importance of credit, how to get it, and how to protect it. So kids today are ill-equipped to deal with the ever-increasing threats to their credit futures. Although identity theft is nothing new, online hacking of



databases has made vast amounts of credit information available to criminals.

How can you protect your child from identity theft? Start by educating your children about the importance of keeping their identities secure. Go online to the credit reporting bureaus, and pull reports on their social security numbers. Some states will allow you to put a freeze on the credit report to prevent unauthorized access; this may be a good idea if you know your child shouldn't need credit for awhile. The Identity Theft Resource Center has some good tips on protecting your or your child's credit information, as well as links to the major credit reporting bureaus. 



In Action—One Person Can Make a Difference

The author Mark Twain once said, "The secret of getting ahead is getting started. The secret of getting started is breaking your complex overwhelming tasks into small manageable tasks, and then starting on the first one."


I could not agree more. If someone at i-SAFE had told me I needed to do the following, I would not have known where to begin.

- 17 i-PARENT Programs,
- be the keynote speaker and conduct i-SAFE breakout sessions at the Tennessee State PTA Convention
- conduct two i-SAFE sessions at a Tennessee State Administrator Academy
- train 54 librarians

- present i-SAFE to all 48 PTA presidents in our school system
- present at the Tennessee School Boards Association Safety Summit

Yet that is what I have done so far. And I say so far because I see too many students and parents who need to be educated on the dangers lurking online, as well as on the safe and responsible use of the Internet.

It is a never-ending battle, and I cannot do it alone. I'm not asking you to replicate my list. I'm just asking that you to do one thing. Then do another. Pretty soon you will have your own list, and your family, friends, and community will thank you. And so will I.


John Simi, Technology Specialist 

Did You Know?

AOL Sues Phishing "Gangs"

America Online filed three civil lawsuits against 30 unnamed phishing "gangs" from around the world. They are seeking \$18 million in damages. The lawsuits were filed in Virginia and fall under a state antiphishing law adopted in July 2005. "Our intention is to bust them apart and put them out of business, which is good for AOL and good for the Internet at-large," said Nicholas Graham, an AOL spokesperson.

AOL says the \$18 million will address the effect phishing has on the company, not on their users. But they added that any monetary award would "directly" benefit AOL users because the money would be used to fight phishing and other online scams.

According to the Anti-Phishing Working Group Web site, nearly 50,000 phishing Web sites were created last year alone. 

Assessments: Test Results are In


Okay, so the National Assessment Center (NAC) is not really giving students a test, but it is asking new questions. The group that first noticed cyber bullying as a growing epidemic in Spring 2004 is asking kids about online social networks, cell phones, alcohol, and more. The early answers from students may shock you.

Grades 5–12 surveyed

- 12 percent post personal information on their blog.
- 12 percent say anyone can access their blog.
- 9 percent have used a cell phone to take someone else's picture without their knowledge.

Grades 9–12 surveyed

- 6 percent have used a cell phone to cheat on a test in school.
- 27 percent currently drink alcoholic beverages.


These numbers are from a database of 4,700 students polled during February. Since the inception of i-SAFE assessments, the NAC has surveyed more than 300,000 students. 

X-BLOCK Marks the Spot

Have you heard? There's a new place on the Web for kids and teens to hang out, learn about cyber safety, and share their online experiences with others. The recently created X-BLOCK is designed for youth to make the cyber world their world.

The new Web site is a multimedia experience that will redefine your kids' attitudes on "safe" sites. X-BLOCK is an interactive site with six main areas:

- i-DRiVE TV – high-tech television for students, by students
- chat room – monitored; education provided by i-SAFE staff
- the 411 – latest and greatest news and programs available
- contests – this month: a filmmaker contest
- i-MENTORs – for the student who wants to lead
- i-MENTOR Training Network – online certification with videos

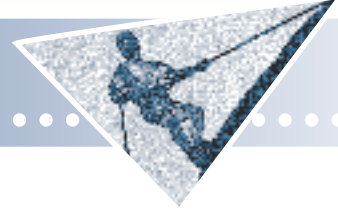
So as you take your youth on a tour of the World Wide Web, visit X-BLOCK (<http://xblock.isafe.org>), and help them make a difference in your community today. 

In Your Neighborhood



Everyday there are many i-SAFE America events going on across the country. We've made it easy for you to get involved and help spread the message of Internet safety to your peers and your community. Simply check out our "Calendar of Events" at http://www.isafe.org/channels/sub.php?ch=ai&sub_id=3 to find an event near you.

The Power of One—*Today's Open Forum*



Community meetings are great tools that are often overlooked. They can be very important to a community by giving its people a chance to speak their minds on the issues that concern them. The meetings are a safe, peaceful way to debate controversial issues. A community meeting can also reach many more people than just the people who attend the meeting.


Many people really have little impact on the decisions made in their communities. Without community meetings, there would be no easy way to speak directly to the decision makers. During a community meeting, the residents of the community have a chance to express their feelings in front of city officials and the rest of the community. People can try to defend their side of an argument to stop something they feel is wrong. For example, if someone buys land in the community and wants to build an apartment complex, some residents may be unhappy. If the community held a meeting, residents could openly discuss options while informing city officials how strongly they feel about the topic.

A community meeting is a safe place for residents to express how they truly feel. They go into the meeting knowing that they are going to hear things they might not want to hear. And they wouldn't always have to be for negative debates, either.

Community meetings don't just reach the people who attend them. Residents who attend could spread the word



to others. Television and radio stations could also attend the meeting and then discuss what happened the next day on their shows.

Community meetings are a great way for the people to communicate and an organized way for people to present their arguments to decision makers. They are in safe, open environments that can reach a large number of people. These meetings are important and should be exercised more often. 

Internet Safety Tip for Parents




Regularly review your computer files, also known as checking your computer history. The good news is that you can find out where other computer users in your house go on the World Wide Web without expensive software. However, each Internet browser has a different way of doing this. With the many different browsers available and our limited space, we suggest you contact your browser to find out exactly how.

Remember, for many years, well before the Internet, kids have been finding ways around their parents' best intentions. For your generation, it might have been sneaking out a bedroom window while your parents were awake in the next room. For this generation, it is sneaking around online while parents are looking over their shoulders. After all, do you know chat acronyms? This is our way of telling you that Internet history can be erased as easily as it can be checked.

Did you know . . .

- 53 percent of students say they have seen something on the Internet they thought should not be there?
- 35 percent of students feel freer to do what they want on the Internet than in the physical world?
- 73 percent of students think there is a need for kids and teens to learn Internet safety?

Regularly reviewing your computer files is good way to keep your kids safe online; but it is not the only way. Check out the i-SAFE newsroom (http://www.isafe.org/channels/sub.php?ch=op&sub_id=4) for tips and more stats like the ones in this article. 



Get Involved

Identify and Invite Leaders

Step two to forming an i-PARENT Board is identifying and inviting community leaders. i-SAFE recommends going for every person you feel is a leader in your area. Not everyone will have the time to help your board, so invite them all, and be thankful for the ones who do accept.

As you work on invitations, remember that leaders are not limited to elected officials. Look for the people making noise and getting things done—they are leaders. In your invitation, make sure you emphasize why Internet safety is a priority in your area, the need for their leadership, and how much of their time is required. And make it brief, because they, like you, are busy.

**If you have questions or need help, contact parents@isafe.org. For archives of past steps, go to http://www.isafe.org/channels/sub.php?ch=op&sub_id=4.*

Team Up with i-SAFE

Currently, i-SAFE has reached more than one million students with Internet safety information. By providing free materials, programs, and educational videos, students are learning how to make positive choices when challenged with today's technology. Not only do students learning to protect themselves against predators, they are also learning how to make decisions regarding intellectual property, identity theft, and more.

i-SAFE strives to provide your family with the most current information regarding the issues youth face today on the Internet. In order to bring our programs and materials to your community and your home, we rely upon donations.

We would be grateful if you, or perhaps someone you know, could assist i-SAFE in educating as many children as possible. Since i-SAFE is a 501(c)(3) corporation, your donations are fully tax deductible.

To donate, you can e-mail donations@isafe.org or go to http://www.isafe.org/channels/sub.php?ch=gi&sub_id=2.

We Value Your Input

Do you have a question or a comment about an article? Perhaps you have a story you wish to share with other readers. Do you know somebody whose story will inspire others to get involved? Whatever the case, we would like to know. Please e-mail us at editor@isafe.org with questions, comments, or contributions. If snail mail is your preference, **send written correspondence to:**

i-SAFE Editor
5963 La Place Ct.
Suite 309
Carlsbad, CA 92008

The series of i-SAFE newsletters also includes the *i-EDUCATOR Times* and *Kewl Timez* (for students). We encourage you to read the others and ask you to use the main article to initiate discussion and action with your students and your community.

About i-SAFE

Founded in 1998 and active in all 50 states, i-SAFE America Inc. is the leader in Internet safety education. i-SAFE is a nonprofit foundation whose mission is to educate and empower youth to make their Internet experiences safe and responsible. The goal is to educate students on how to avoid dangerous, inappropriate, or unlawful online behavior. i-SAFE accomplishes this through dynamic K through 12 curriculum and community-outreach programs to parents, law enforcement, and community leaders. It is the only Internet safety foundation to combine these elements. www.isafe.org

i-SAFE America Inc. is designated a tax-exempt 501(c)(3) charitable organization by the U.S. Internal Revenue Service. i-SAFE America Inc. is funded by the U.S. Congress through the Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention, Office of Justice Programs, Department of Justice.