PLUGGED IN

THE INTERNET is an amazing connection of millions of computers around the world and it can be a lot of fun as well as educational. We recommend that parents begin safety conversations and guidelines establishment with acknowledgement of what is GOOD about the Internet and how it can be useful in learning and getting help. However, it is only electronic. It has no conscience, no morality and no ethics. It is indeed wonderful and powerful but it is also unrestricted and un regulated. Web pages, chat rooms, and electronic bulletin boards can present subjects to children that are unsuitable. There are sites and forums promoting hatred, racism, cults, pornography, terrorism and other objectionable and illegal material, accessible to all within a click of a mouse. Even more concerning, the Internet provides a relative anonymity that hides the interests and activities of those who target children. But together with our children we can make it much harder for them. Through education, plans and strategies we can shift the power away from them and into the hands of our children.

RISKS ASSOCIATED WITH UNSUPERVISED ACCESS

- Cons and Scams - Any of us may be tricked into providing information that may pose a financial risk (i.e. credit card numbers)
- Harassment - We could become a target for harassing demeaning or hate mail messages or literature. (Cyber Bullying).
- Computer Viruses - We could inadvertently download a file that contains a virus which may corrupt, damage, or delete, files stored by your computer.
- Exposure to inappropriate material - We could inadvertently access material of a sexual, violent, or illegal or otherwise inappropriate nature, both graphical and textual. (Normalizing).
- Physical harm - We might be tricked into providing information or arrange an encounter that could pose a risk to our safety or to the safety of our family. (Grooming).

RISK REDUCTION STRATEGIES

- Instead of a child's bedroom, consider placing the computer in the family room or den where privacy is not an issue and activity is more easily monitored.
- Talk and partner with your child to discuss and create reasonable rules regarding computer use and Internet access with your child.
- Restrict your child's access to appropriate forums. (Software Protection).
- Stay in touch with what your child is doing. Have them show you the services they access and what they do online.
- Talk to other internet users and your service provider about safety options they provide.
- Research available software to monitor and screen offensive material and sensitive information.
- If you have a wireless system in your house, consider stronger control and more frequent password changes as well as software protection as many of our children's toys also can go online.

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radKIDS ON...
CREATING AN ON-LINE radKIDS PLAN / SAFETY CONTRACT

It is very important that both parents and children take an active role in minimizing the opportunities for unwanted contact online. W recommend you take time as a family to create an Online Safety Contract establishing the guidelines you and your children will follow when surfing the Internet. Below are some thing you may want to include in your radKIDS plan:

CHILDREN'S SECTION

- As a radKID, I will tell a trusted adult immediately if I find something that makes me feel uncomfortable, is scary, or I know I should not see.
- As a radKID, I will not chat, text or go into any interactive communication spaces without my parents permission or a trusted adult sitting with me.
- As a radKID, I will never give out my name, age, address, town, phone number, password, parent's name, or school information to anyone over the internet.
- As a radKID, I will not send my picture to anyone without my parent's permission.
- As a radKID, I will let my parents know who my online friends are and their nicknames and contacts emails/IPS.
- As a radKID, I will never meet with someone whom I have not met online without my parent's permission and will always take a safety partner with me.
- As a radKID, I will not enter sites that charge or buy anything without my parent's permission.
- As a radKID, I will not use bad or suggestive language (language that I would not use with my parents).
- As a radKID, I will not download or open any games or programs with out first showing my parents.
- As a radKID, I will only visit sites my parents approve.
- As a radKID, I will open email only from people I know.
- As a radKID, I won't go to social media sites without my parent's approval.

PARENT'S SECTION

- We will research the dangers that are on the internet and discuss them with our children so they will know how to react if they come across them. (see Internet Safety 101 at http://www.internetsafety101.org/).
- We will take an active role in our children's participation in online activities. (Checking in and sitting and talking with them).
- We will set up, monitor and limit the times when our children may use the Internet to explore, learn, and have fun.
- If our child approaches us about something he/she has seen online and feels uncomfortable about, we will take the time to listen, trust them and their judgement, and take appropriate action as it is internets fault and not their fault.

The contract, once signed, should be placed in a visible spot near the computer as a reminder to everyone about online safety.