



youth service bureau

3 Ways to Keep Kids Safe (and Kind) Online

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As part of its Internet & American Life Project, in 2011 the Pew Research Center conducted a survey on teens' experiences of online cruelty. The survey revealed some interesting information about how teens and parents are communicating about online experiences.

According to the survey:

- 58% of teen Internet and cell phone users say their **parents have been the biggest influence** on what they think is appropriate or inappropriate when using the Internet or a cell phone.
- Of the teens that reported witnessing or experiencing online cruelty, **only 36% sought advice from parents** for how to handle it, whereas **53% reached out to a peer**. Younger teen girls (ages 12-13) were more likely to rely on friends and peers for advice than older girls.
- While most parents do talk with their teens about safe and risky online behavior, **only about half of parents utilize parental controls to manage their child's online experiences, and only 34% use parental controls to restrict cell phone usage**. (94% have talked with their teens about what should and should not be shared online; 93% have talked about internet and cell phone safety; 87% have talked with their child about what he or she does on the internet),

Takeaway #1

- Parents have the ability to be a strong influence on their children when it comes to what is considered appropriate/inappropriate online use...but teens are *not* turning to their parents when they need help dealing with inappropriate online experiences.

What can you do about it?

- Continue to talk with your children about Internet AND cell phone safety, but include conversations about what they should do if they run into trouble (they should come talk to you, not their friends!).
- Encourage your child to come to you with questions or concerns and be sure to keep an open mind. If you get upset or angry when your child approaches you for help, they may not trust you and come to you for help again.
- Keep yourself educated about new social media trends, apps, and websites that your children are using and their potential for cyberbullying or other inappropriate activities.
- Check out our online Resources page or www.common sense media.org for additional information on new trends!

Takeaway #2

- Parents are talking with their children about Internet and cell phone safety...but are not utilizing parental controls.

What can you do about it?

- In addition to having important conversations about what to do if your child experiences or witnesses something inappropriate online, you may want to consider utilizing parental controls on both the Internet and cell phone.
 - Inappropriate websites and apps can be blocked
 - Text-messaging features can be disabled
 - You can set up passwords that are required to purchase new apps
- Remember that parental controls can backfire, as children may find ways around these controls or may set up secret accounts you don't know about. If you choose to set up parental controls, this should come *after* you have an open conversation with your child about online safety.
- Consider the pros and cons of using parental controls while keeping in mind your child's age and maturity level.
- For additional information, we encourage you to check out our Social Media Resource Guide, available on the Resources page on our website [here](#). Or, call your cell phone and/or Internet service providers.

Takeaway #3

- Children, but especially young girls, are more likely to turn to friends, not parents, for advice on dealing with online cruelty.

What can you do about it?

- Start young – discussing your expectations for your child's behavior online and on their cell phone should start as soon as they start using these devices.
- You may think your child is "too young" or "too good of a kid" to have to worry about them running into trouble, but don't assume anything. Young children need to have these conversations just as much as older children. The Internet can be a scary place for young children who don't know how to navigate it properly, and no matter how "good" your child is, he or she may run into trouble.
- Again, encourage open and honest conversation in the home, and keep an open mind when your child comes to you for help.
- Get to know your child's friends! This might give you some insight into how they are supporting each other if and when they find trouble online.

You can read more about the Internet & American Life Project and this report here:

<http://www.pewinternet.org/2011/11/09/teens-kindness-and-cruelty-on-social-network-sites/>
