



THE INTERNET NEWSPAPER: NEWS BLOGS VIDEO COMMUNITY

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**Parents, It's 10pm. Do You Know What Your Children Are Watching?**

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Before the days of social media, the slogan for parents used to say “It’s 10pm, do you know where your children are?” A part of me really misses those days, particularly as social media has replaced many of the face-to-face interactions that occur between children and teens.

Parents, understandably, have trouble keeping up with the various forms of social media teens and young adults are using to capture and document a tremendous portion of their lives. The good, the bad and the ugly is being recorded and shared. And some of these recordings — such as the horrific YouTube video by Logan Paul that showed a dead body in the “suicide forest” in Japan — can cause much distress to those who view them. This video has since been taken down, but not before these tragic images were viewed by many of Paul’s 15 million plus subscribers, many of whom are preteens and young children.

I recommend that parents have a discussion with their children about safety when using different forms of social media; from Facebook to texting and anything in between. Today, the culture seems to promote that “anything goes” in regards to self-expression. There needs to be a discussion about what constitutes appropriate behavior, and what actions could have huge repercussions that damage their reputation and are harmful to others. Have these conversations regularly with your children and set reasonable expectations.

I am also in the camp that children under the age of six or seven should be very, very closely monitored. They should not be exposed to social media content without parental controls, as developmentally, they are not ready to comprehend what may pop up, particularly violent, graphic images like the ones in Paul’s video. I recommend that parents diligently monitor their TVs, computers, phones, etc., to make sure that children are not exposed to graphic videos and photos. You can’t “unsee” something. Once they view it, it is in their brain forever.

Let's protect children from the dangers that lurk on the internet. I am a big fan of SafeKids.com that has many excellent resources for protecting children and teens from online dangers.

And, they have a specific "pledge for parents" and a contract for on-line safety that parents should read and practice. They are applicable to computers, iPhones and all mobile technology that children use. Here are a few of the key points.

1. I will get to know the services and Web sites my child uses. If I don't know how to use them, I'll get my child to show me how. **(Parents, this is critical, take heed!).**
2. I will set reasonable rules and guidelines for computer use by my children and will discuss these rules. I'll remember to monitor their compliance with these rules, especially when it comes to the amount of time they spend on the computer.
3. I will not overreact if my child tells me about a problem he or she is having on the Internet. Instead, we'll work together to try to solve the problem and prevent it from happening again.
4. I will try to get to know my child's "online" friends, the same way I know their other friends.

The New York Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Children (NYSPCC) also encourages parents to stress these safety points to their children:

- Report any nude or violent pictures that they receive on their phone or computer to either you, or to another adult that they trust. They should not delete the message and get you, or a teacher, or school counselor involved immediately.
- Please caution them to be careful what they download or look at. Some images are extreme, and once they see it, it's in their mind forever. This is particularly true for violent and/or pornographic images.
- Adults who talk to them about sex online are committing a crime. So are adults who meet underage teens for sex. Some teens may think it's fun but it is serious trouble and best to report it to the police. Parents, you can make a report through the cybertipline.
- Tell them to be extremely careful if they go to meet someone in person that they met on the internet. They may think that they know them well, but they don't. Have them tell you - or someone that they trust - before they go. Don't go alone, bring a friend. Always meet in a public place. Make sure that they have their cell phone and an exit plan.

Parents, the frontier of social media is changing all the time. Be aware and be prepared to help your children navigate it!

For more information about keeping your children safe visit [www.nyspcc.org](http://www.nyspcc.org).

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