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Practicing Digital Intelligence: Internet and Cellphone Safety Tips for Tweens, Teens, Emerging Adults and Seniors

By Judy Arnall

Cellphone Safety

- Hotels, cafes, airports and anywhere there is free public wifi access are the worst places for hackers to see what you are getting on your phone. Try to wait until you are in a password protected area before using the internet. At the very least, don't make any financial transactions or input any passwords to get to your favourite sites. Do not access your bank, paypal, or credit cards websites.

- Change your passwords every month. An easy way to change passwords often is to use a single word that has a Capital letter and is more than 6 letters long such as - Summer4. Add a number at the end and each month "change" the password by increasing or decreasing the number.

- If you can, use the "forget password" link most often and then you generate a new password each time you log in, which adds a safety measure to your sites.

- Companies have policies on cellphone use and photo taking. Many companies state that if they sense you are on the phone while driving and speaking with them, regardless of having a hands-free model, they will automatically hang up for distracted driving and safety reasons. As well, many stores, leisure centers and venues are banning photographs and video taking. Be sure you know the organization's policies.

- If someone asks to borrow your phone because their battery is dead, do not hand over your phone. Direct them to a store or offer to make the call for them. Don't let your phone leave your hands.

- Ladies should never hang their handbags over the backs of their chairs. Keep it on your body.

- Give your child an unlimited texting plan. Average use is 2200 texts a month.

- Get teens to pay for their smartphones. Have a discussion of roaming charges, and data. Discuss the "fine print" which states which harmless diversions such as "voting" and downloading ringtones or calling/texting any 900 number can incur charges. Discuss how much is a gigabyte versus a megabyte.

- Model boundaries. Be unavailable at times, so kids can learn to solve their own problems.

- Establish cellphone contracts with kids – usage, knowledge of laws, payment, etc. Have both kids and parents sign and post the contract where everyone can see it.

- Have your kids take the TechSavvy Survey. It has great discussion points. http://techessentials.rogers.com/

Computer/Internet Safety

- Never leave your laptop on a restaurant table or in the care of others. Take it with you to the restroom.
- Children under 18 should have aliases on all social media accounts.
- Parents, friends and relatives should be made aware not to tag children's names on photographs. Set up social media settings that give alerts when photos are tags.
- Teach that true friends respect one's wishes.
- Warn kids not give friends their gaming passwords. Their friends can now give their other friends the passwords to play with them and before they know it, they have been locked out of their games for bad behavior.
- Teach kids how to manage their gaming passwords. Keep a little book they can write email address the account is billed to, the username and the password.
- When discussing sensitive issues by email, pick up the phone instead. Email can be used as evidence in court and can easily be copied.
- Parents, have one rule to never meet anyone from the internet without parent's supervision. Talk about grooming (gaining trust, praising, active listening by perpetrator), luring and what constitutes friendship. Don't lecture. Listen more than talk. Watch the movie, "Trust" (2010, Directed by David Swimmer, Rated R) to learn about how luring works. Consider watching it together with your teen and have a discussion after.
- Know the risk factors of luring: age range of 10-14, fear of parents, fear of losing cellphone or computer, peer dependency, few friends, and no activities outside of school.
- Teach kids how to avoid cyberbullying: Prevention is the best defense. Don't be in a position where alcohol or nudity photographs are being taken. Take action when offensive postings are up.
- Discuss "friend" settings. On social media, "friends" of "friends" settings is really public.
- Put google alerts on kids and elderly parent's names. Anywhere the name is mentioned on the internet will show up in your email inbox.
- Children should be made aware of local laws regarding texting/emailing of photographs. They need to know what constitutes pornography. Sending photos of naked body parts to anyone under age 18 is illegal.

- Review social media settings every month. They change and default to lower standards without users knowing.

- Watch identifying details on photographs and in postings – school names, person's name, sports team names, birth year, birthday, addresses, house numbers, home town, etc.

- "Permission" is the golden word of netiquette – Ensure children know copyright rules and laws. Insist they don't post anything not belonging to them such as friend's photos, school work, songs, videos, without asking the owner's permission first.

- Discuss spam. People who send an email to more than a group of 25 to 50 recipients may find themselves blacklisted. They need to clear off their account with their internet provider and be on a blacklist probation period for a few weeks until they have been cleared. This means that no email may go out.

- Show kids and seniors what spam and phishing emails look like. Ask them to point out clues: misspellings, bad grammar, generic addresses, threatening language, no contacts other than links (that capture your email address as "live" if you investigate the link).

- If anyone calls about your credit card being compromised in any way and want to know information from you including the number, tell them you will call them back. Then call the number on the back of the card and if they don't know anything, it was not a legitimate query.

- Help children make a purchase online. Show what information is important and what is not. Many online marketers want demographic information that goes beyond what is necessary to make the purchase. Show kids that only the red stars are the ones they need and many of those fields can be filled out with fake information. (If the store is not delivering product, they don't need your physical address.)

- Look for sites that have the "s" in the address which means it is a financially secure site. Sites must have credit card encryption if they are going to accept credit cards.

- Be sure your home network is password protected to ward off drive-by hackers. Change it after your company and guests leave.

- Teach kids and seniors that all reputable sites have easy contact information that must include names, phone numbers, emails, and physical addresses.

- Every adult should have a junk email address (hotmail) and an important one that they check every day.

- Teach how photographs can go viral. Show how to copy a photograph and save it and also how to copy website text into a word file and save it on hard drives.

- Show how to capture a screen. Push "PrntScr" button in the left hand corner of the keyboard. Then "control" and "c" together. Then open up "paint" and push "control" and "v" together. Save it as a new file. You now have a copy of anything on the internet and can put it on facebook, in an email, in a powerpoint or anywhere.

- Teach virus management. Download free virus protection such as adware, malware bytes, cc cleaner, McAfee, and show how to use it at least monthly.

- Don't open emails from friends that have one word generic subject lines such as "Amazing!" or seem like an out of characteristic tone for the sender such as "Look at this!" or "Brittany's Naked Video!" They are often a sign that your friend's computer has been attacked by a virus and is now sending out baiting emails under their name. Don't bite by clicking it open or clicking on the links. Delete it and ask your friend if they sent it.

- Always ask organizations about posting and privacy policies. Many school council minutes are being posted on the internet because no one has questioned its privacy level.

- Use portable hard drives to back up at least monthly. Keep one offsite. An easy way to back up is to use a web-based cloud email service such as gmail and email yourself attachments or documents.

- Watch email names – hotsexychick@hotmail.com is not one of the best.

- Parents – think of your child as a teenager. Will they want your posting available to their peers? Can their peers use it to bully your child?

- Google yourself and your children's names often and see what comes up. Contact organizations if you see postings that you do not wish to see and want them removed.

For more information, check out The Little Black Book of Scams for interesting new scams. This is available from the government website and is very trustworthy. http://www.competitionbureau.gc.ca/eic/site/cb-bc.nsf/eng/03074.html

Best Safety Tip: If in doubt, leave it out. Have an internet presence but make sure it's clean. Help your child manage their online profile until they are mature enough to do it themselves. Think relationship first – keep communication open.

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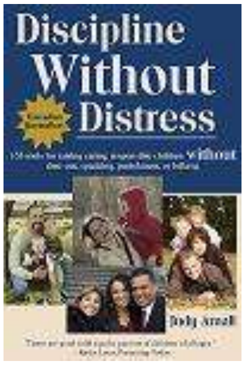
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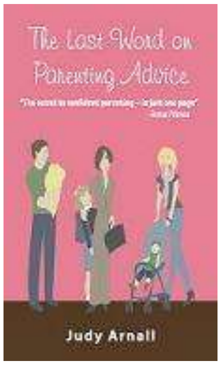
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