

Counseling Connection

Cyber Safety Awareness

After attending a few workshops on Internet Safety and this being Cyber Safety Week, I thought I would share some information that might be beneficial to you. Here are some of my notes from some workshops. On the back is an article on cyber-bullying and things to be aware of as a parent.

Why is the Internet so Attractive to Criminals?

There are many reasons:

1. Access to the internet is relatively unrestricted.
2. Online activities are unregulated
3. Criminals can maintain anonymity
4. There are a large number of targets
5. It's difficult to investigate or prosecute

Children's Awareness

Children do not know the dangers of chatting on line, their internet experience is not life experience. Talk to your kids about internet dangers. See the following on Tips for Parents. There are really good sources out there for parents such as:

1. www.netsmartz.org/index.htm (this is an excellent site for parents to learn about internet safety. It also has activities for kids to learn about internet safety.) If you click on parent/guardian, watch video, and then real life stories you can find stories from kids that have experienced dangerous situations while chatting on line. There are many stories for parents that emphasizes the importance of being internet aware and helping their child be internet safe. There is an interesting story called Tracking Teresa. Press play to see a simulation of how someone can track and find out your name, email address, personal interests, home phone number, home address, and name of school all within **20 minutes** while chatting online.
2. www.internet-safety.org
3. www.safewiredschools.cosn.org

Do you know what to watch out for on line? Here are some warning signs that your child may not be internet safe:

1. Child spends a large amount of time online
2. You find inappropriate material on the computer
3. Your child is receiving phone calls from people you don't know
4. Your child receives gifts or mail from people you don't know
5. Your child turns off the monitor when you come in the room
6. Your child is withdrawn from the family

Tips for Parents

1. Put the computer in the family room
2. Set guidelines
3. Understand services used by your child
4. Investigate blocking and screening services (ie. Net nanny)
5. Spend time online with your child
6. Model appropriate netiquette
7. Encourage your child to not give out personal information
8. Remind your child to never meet anyone they have met online without your permission
9. Learn about who your child meets online
10. Explain to your child that chat rooms are not private
11. Be aware of chat line acronyms (ie. paw - parents are watching). You can go to www.netsmartz411.org for a list of chat line acronyms.