A New Kind of Privacy

I grew up in a small town. While I was blessed to do so, I remember feeling that I had no privacy. It seemed like there were eyes around every corner waiting to report my misbehavior. Of course, I knew the people who knew me. But in the Internet age, we are quickly losing privacy, and we don't always know who knows our business or what they wish to do with that information.

Computers remember everything and are powerful enough to sort out small bits of information from a ton of seemingly useless facts. When we participate on the Internet, we leave behind a trail of personal information to be scooped up by friends, family, businesses, search engines, colleges, insurance companies, government agencies, employers and even criminals. We need to teach our children to protect their privacy in a world that encourages us to make everything public.

Have you wondered how companies like Google and Facebook can be worth so much money when what they offer is free? Companies like these make money on information that is valuable to others. By collecting information from the sites visited, companies can learn much about your child's motivations, behaviors, attitudes and habits. Internet services that we use every day have many ways to mine information, and most often it is used to tailor advertising to our wants and needs.

Targeted advertising can be a nuisance, but this information can be used for other things such as cyberbullying, stalking, identity fraud and access by predators. Assuming your children use the Internet, phone, game console or other device, be sure to teach them how to maintain their privacy. Help your children learn which information can and cannot be shared. When your child first learned to talk, I am sure you helped him to understand that not everything that popped into his head needed to be shared out loud. A similar idea needs to be taught regarding information shared on social networking sites.

Social norms regarding private information are changing. Things that in the past we would have shared only with our closest friends are now routinely documented on social networking sites. Intimate details, likes, locations and routines are all useful information to others. Young people find it easy to overshare. When someone overshares, it means that unnecessary and potentially embarrassing information has been released to the public. This can be unsafe, interpreted as rude and can undermine trust, causing others to wonder if the person posting can keep anything a secret.

Help your children to realize that what they post online stays there forever and that there are ways to access even a private social network account. Your child should not only be careful about words and photos but also about giving out her location, address, the name of her school or anything that would help an unwanted person find her.

Talk to your children about having a reason for everything they post, and teach them to think about how information could be misused. Asking questions that help your child to think will do much for encouraging this kind of discernment.

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about oversharing and cyberbullying will go a long way in helping him see the consequences of actions. Help him to see that sharing on such sites is a witnessing opportunity. Words posted should be constructive, not destructive.

Here is a list of things you can do with your children to help secure their social networking sites. Directions for the following recommendations can be found by accessing the link provided at the end of this article:

1. Help her set basic privacy settings and limit information sharing to people she knows.

2. Help him set tagging to offer him the option to remove approval.

3. Help her check applications that may be mining her activities for information to share with businesses.

4. Help him edit his profile to keep information private.

5. Help her turn on the https feature to protect her account from other information or spam attacks. This is especially important if your child uses wifi to access accounts.

6. Look into software such as Facebook Disconnect and Adblock Plus that will prevent a connection between your child's page and other businesses.

Prov. 22:1 teaches us, "A good name is to be chosen rather than great riches." This advice is as important now as when it was written. Children may not see the long-term problem with a stained reputation. They don't realize that people make judgments about their character based on what is posted on their page. And they may not realize that what is posted on the Internet will live as long as the Internet itself. With God's help, you can help them to understand and maintain privacy in a technological world.

For further study

This link will help you to increase your privacy factor: *http://lifehacker.com/5813990/the-always-up+to+date-guide-to-managing-your-facebook-privacy.*

When thoughts, links or photos are posted online, it is easy to separate actions from how real people might react or be affected. When something shocking is said to a person face-to-face, there is immediate feedback. The same thing said online gives slower feedback. Children are developing that sense of empathy that allows them to make good decisions in relationships with other people. Talking with your child

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