

## KEEPING KIDS SAFE ONLINE

Our children are actively using mobile technology that was unheard of 20 to 30 years ago and it's fantastic that all the answers can be at our fingertips within moments. But, there is that darker side, the side that gives answers to questions our children didn't know they had, which of course, violates the "adult conspiracy".

*Adult Conspiracy: The act of humanoid societies keeping interesting things from children before they understand the consequences of those things. These things may include summoning the stork, foul language or other activities that may cause illness [like overeating treats and candy]... Okay, onward.*

There are many steps that can be taken to outright control this behavior like the filtering that is included on most wireless routers [content filtering and parental controls differ based on the products you use] This may be great and all, but trust still should be built between your child and you to retain a relationship where they feel confident to come to you when there is a problem.

Knowing when and where to draw the line according to your own personal comfort levels and ethics is a constant struggle for human beings, especially adolescents. Peer pressure is often the stressor that influences teens to overstep their boundaries to engage in regretful behavior. As parents, we need to give children the intellectual and emotional tools to make the right decisions.

So rather than viewing the problem as something that has to be blocked, parents can view the 'over-sharing' by children as something that needs to be acknowledged. The first step is to identify boundaries that should be set.

Create hypothetical situations and ask them to set their own boundaries and tolerance levels. They can better learn to defend these boundaries by already knowing where they stand. I. E. "A contact asks you to send an inappropriate image of yourself. What would you do? What would you say? What are your boundaries?" In doing this type of activity, you get them to think of why they would or would not perform such an action while also giving you the opportunity to point out additional outcomes of making a wrong choice.

Be sure you and your children know the acceptable use and consequences for unacceptable behavior. If they choose to ignore these policies and access inappropriate content, don't overreact but be ready to follow up with appropriate behavioral redirection.

Many children and adolescents believe that search history is only stored on the computer they are using. If you delete the browsing history, the information is gone. In fact, everything we do on the

internet, every search, every image we view, is tracked and stored forever on servers worldwide. It can never be deleted and could be accessed. We may not need to be fearful of this fact; however, we do need to be aware.

Responsible use of the internet should be a combined effort for parents, caregivers, teachers and the child.