

The purpose of this sheet is to provide parents and educators background information on child development and personal safety. This information will help with making important decisions in the best interest of children's personal safety.

### The Growing Personality...

- Can be very resourceful
- Increased ability to think ahead
- Increased ability to think abstractly
- Can solve hypothetical problems
- Concerned with their future
- Trust in peers and adults who support their dreams and hopes
- Experiment with various roles in an attempt to figure out who they are
- Identity appears fully developed; yet is not yet fully mature
- Look for role model who will inspire them
- Object strongly to all narrow limitations on their self-image
- Sexual identity is established
- Seek intimacy
- Healthy intimate relationships are important
- Seek independence and expect privacy

### What do children want to do? New Interests...

- Seek employment
- Future planning
- Volunteering
- Driving
- Host and attend parties
- Sleepovers (nights and weekends)
- Travel, camp with friends
- Increase time commitment in specialized extra-curricular activities
- Spend time online (eg. instant messaging, peer-to-peer, chat rooms, games and emailing)
- Use web cams and digital cameras to send pictures
- Use cell phones (recording, taking pictures, text messaging)
- Create personal web pages
- Confide in friends online and offline

### Things to Consider...

- Reinforce household guidelines for Internet use and set limits on the amount of time spent online
- Use filtering software
- Reinforce the message that the Internet is public
- Monitor independence. Even though adolescents can appear as though they can “handle” things, they require adult guidance and supervision
- Explain where it is appropriate for them to have privacy: confiding in close friends face-to-face, writing in a journal, private space in their bedroom (there is no privacy on the Internet)
- Know who they are communicating with through email and instant messaging
- Monitor use of peer-to-peer file sharing programs (used to download music and games) as they may be exposed to sexually explicit material
- Monitor use of web cams, cell phones, posting and exchanging pictures online
- Explain that once a picture is sent online they lose control of what is done with it (it may never be completely removed from the Internet)
- Teach them that it is illegal for people to manufacture, possess or distribute naked or sexually explicit pictures of children under 18 years old (they need to tell a trusted adult if they are presented with this situation)
- Teach them that it is illegal for adults to offer them gifts or money in exchange for sexual activity
- Explain that it is illegal to threaten someone online or offline. If someone threatens them, they need to tell a trusted adult
- Explain that there is no need or urgency to respond to any messages. Encourage them not to respond to messages that make them uncomfortable
- Teach them to trust their instincts\*. Use “what if” scenarios\* to help them anticipate possible situations and practice appropriate responses
- Remind them to use inaccurate information for member profiles, as they can be viewed publicly. Ensure screen names and nicknames are nondescript (not revealing interests, age, gender, or posting pictures)
- Discuss what it means to have integrity and how to make decisions without compromising integrity (their moral and ethical code)
- Teach them the difference between loving relationships and controlling relationships\*. If they are involved in an intimate relationship that is controlling, they can learn to confuse intimacy with control. (They should never meet in person someone they first met online without someone accompanying them)
- Discuss high-risk behaviour online and offline and create “what if” scenarios together to help them anticipate dangerous situations and possible solutions\*
- Teach them to incorporate personal safety strategies\* into their daily lives
- Teach them assertiveness skills
- Ensure they have at least one trusted adult they can talk to
- Encourage open communication and be available to talk
- Monitor and verify job offers and promote use of the buddy system
- Have them enter emergency contact numbers on speed dial on their cell phones
- Establish guidelines for who your children can drive with
- Explain the risks involved with hitch-hiking and giving rides to people that parents haven’t given permission to drive with

• Adapted from: Linda Ashford; Sharon Cooper, M.D.; Gavin de Becker; Erik Erikson; Jay Giedd; William Glasser, M.D.; Daniel Goleman; Micheal Gurian; Kenneth Lanning; Mary Anne Layden and Linnea W. Smith, M.D.; Judith Lewis Herman; Amy Lynch; Jean Piaget; David Soussa; Deborah Yurgelun-Todd

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