



BLOGGING AND ONLINE JOURNALING

Blogging is a frequent, chronological publication of personal thoughts and Web links. Blogging and online journaling are very similar. They are part of the daily lives of many teens and college students. Friends use Blogs or Online Journals to communicate with each other.

A Blog or Online Journal is often a mixture of what is happening in a person's life and what is happening on the Web, a kind of hybrid diary/guide site, although there are as many unique types of Blogs or Online Journals as there are people. Since individuals often create the Blogs that children frequent, the online publishers often don't censor (or verify) information that they include on their sites. As a result, not only is personal information shared, personal opinion is also prevalent.

HAZARDS

The dangers of Blogging and Online Journaling are much the same as those associated with social networks such as Facebook.com and MySpace.com. In these environments children often share personal information without realizing they are doing so. By sharing personal thoughts, activities in which one is engaged, or information that relates to schedules and events, the individual provides potential predators information which may be used to identify, locate, or to initiate conversations.

WHAT CAN PARENTS DO?

1. Establish rules for your child's Internet usage. This includes the amount of time they spend online, the times of day when they may use the Internet, the sites where they are allowed (or not allowed) to visit, and what to do if they are faced with something that makes them uncomfortable or is inappropriate.
2. Talk with your child about his or her online activities. Be sure they know what personal information is, and how they may inadvertently share it with others in the online world. Make sure your child knows that if they receive an inappropriate message, find a site that makes them uncomfortable, or are approached electronically by a stranger that they should tell you about it. When possible your child should save or print the message, image or website to show it to you.
3. Spend time with your child. Go online with your child and have them show you what they do when they're online; what sites they like to visit, what games they play, how they "meet" their friends.
4. Find a Blog that is of interest to you. Join it and participate in the conversations. Understanding how this technology works and experiencing the interactions that occur in the environment better helps you relate to your child's experience.

T.E.S.T.

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